



INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification: H01L 21/20, 21/44, 23/48	A1	(11) International Publication Number: WO 00/10197 (43) International Publication Date: 24 February 2000 (24.02.00)
(21) International Application Number: PCT/US99/18430 (22) International Filing Date: 13 August 1999 (13.08.99) (30) Priority Data: 60/096,616 14 August 1998 (14.08.98) US 09/373,295 12 August 1999 (12.08.99) US (71)(72) Applicant and Inventor: GOLDSTEIN, Avery, N. [US/US]; 26336 Wyoming, Huntington Woods, MI 48070 (US). (74) Agents: GOLDSTEIN, Avery, N. et al.; Gifford, Krass, Groh, Sprinkle, Anderson & Citkowski, P.C., Suite 400, 280 N. Old Woodward Avenue, Birmingham, MI 48009-5394 (US).		(81) Designated States: AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CU, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, UA, UG, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG). Published <i>With international search report.</i>
(54) Title: INTEGRATED CIRCUIT TRENCHED FEATURES AND METHOD OF PRODUCING SAME (57) Abstract <p>The formation of microelectronic structures in trenches and vias of an integrated circuit wafer are described using nanocrystal solutions. A nanocrystal solution is applied to flood the wafer surface. The solvent penetrates the trench recesses within the wafer surface. In the process, nanocrystals dissolved or suspended in the solution are carried into these regions. The solvent volatilizes more quickly from the wafer plateaus as compared to the recesses causing the nanocrystals to become concentrated in the shrinking solvent pools within the recesses. The nanocrystals become stranded in the dry trenches. Heating the wafer to a temperature sufficient to sinter or melt the nanocrystals results in the formation of bulk polycrystalline domains. Heating is also carried out concurrently with nanocrystals solution deposition. Copper nanocrystals of less than about 5 nanometers are particularly well suited for formation of interconnects at temperatures of less than 350 degrees Celcius.</p>		

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INTEGRATED CIRCUIT TRENCHED FEATURES AND METHOD OF PRODUCING SAME

5 Related Applications

This application claims the benefit of provisional patent application Serial No. 60/096,616 which was filed August 14, 1998 and is hereby incorporated by reference.

Field of the Invention

10 The present invention relates to microelectronic trenched feature formation and more particularly to the formation of an interconnect from a nanocrystal solution.

Background of the Invention

An integrated circuit requires conductive interconnects between
15 semiconducting domains in order to communicate signals therebetween. In order to create ever faster microprocessors, smaller dimension interconnects of higher conductivity materials is an ongoing goal.

As microelectronic efficiencies have increased interconnects have decreased in dimensional size and efforts have been made to increase the
20 electrical conductivity of interconnect features. There is an ongoing need for ever smaller interconnects.

The rapid miniaturization of interconnects is occurring simultaneously with the transition from Al to Cu metallization for sub-0.25 μm ICs. The transition from Al to Cu has led to a change in the way interconnects are

formed. While Al has been deposited as a blanket layer which is then patterned by reactive ion etching, Cu interconnects are formed by evaporative deposition into preformed (damascene) trenches and vias followed by chemical mechanical polishing (CMP).

5 As the interconnect width decreases and the aspect ratio increases, conventional vacuum deposition techniques approach the theoretical resolution threshold. Deep, narrow trenches and vias preferentially collect material at the damascene feature edges, leading to void formation. Blanket and selective chemical vapor deposition (CVD) are well established Cu
10 deposition techniques that have a demonstrated ability to fill current interconnect trenches. (A.E. Kaloyeros and M.A. Fury, MRS Bull., (June 1993), pp. 22-29).

 Nonetheless, CVD does not inherently fill trenches preferentially over any other portion of substrate having nucleation sites. Unlike CVD, the
15 proposed method preferentially deposits Cu into trenches based on differential solvent evaporation associated with trenches and as such is expected to work better, the narrower the trench width and higher the aspect ratio. Additionally, heating of the IC substrate during CVD to assure crystalline growth degrades fine architecture structures on the substrate. Thus, the semiconductor industry
20 is in need of an interconnect formation process capable of achieving higher resolution at lower temperature and ideally, at a lower cost.

 The mesoscopic size regime between atoms and bulk materials is characterized by unusual properties. Mesoscopic systems exhibit collective

established that the melting temperature is size dependent in the nanometer size regime and is approximately proportional to the inverse particle radius regardless of the material identity. The size dependent melting temperature of metallic nanocrystals has included studies of Au, Pb and In, Al and Sn. (Au: Ph. Buffat and J-P. Borel, Phys. Rev. A, 13, (1976), 2287-2298. 2287-2298; Pb and In: C. J. Coombes, J. Phys., 2, (1972), 441-449; Al: J. Eckert, J. C. Holzer, C.C. Ahn, Z. Fu and W. L. Johnson, Nanostruct. Matls, 2, (1993), 407-413; and Sn: C.R.M. Wronski, Brit. J. Appl. Phys. 18, (1967), 1731-1737). The reduction in melting temperature as a function of nanocrystal size can be enormous. For example, 2 nm Au nanocrystals melt at about 300 °C, as compared to 1065 °C for bulk gold. (M. Wautelet, J. Phys. D, 24, (1991), 343-346).

Summary of the Invention

A method is described for producing a structure including the application of a solvent containing metal containing nanocrystals to a wafer having a trench cut therein. The nanocrystals having a diameter of between 2 and 20 nanometers. Heating the nanocrystals to form a continuous polycrystalline domain from the nanocrystals within the trench. The present invention is an alternative method of producing such features on a trenched wafer at small dimensions and with a reduced melting temperature. The nanocrystals are preferably copper nanocrystals when the structure is destined to form an interconnect. A microelectronic structure is also formed including nanocrystalline domains in electrical contact with one another, said domains formed to an existing recess within a wafer substrate. The use of nanocrystals

atomic behavior, but not to a sufficient extent so as to preclude quantized effects. Many of the unusual thermodynamic and spectroscopic anomalies associated with mesoscopic systems are attributable to surface effects. Studies have shown surface energies that are 10 to 400 % greater for nanocrystals than for bulk Au and Pt, (C. Solliard and M. Flueli, Surf. Sci. 156, (1985), pp. 487-494) and Al (J. 5 Wolterdorf, A.S. Nepijko and E. Pippel, Sur. Sci. 106, (1981), pp. 64- 72). In the bulk, surface atoms represent such a small percentage of the total that surface effects are largely inconsequential. Surfaces generally possess modified atomic coordination numbers, geometries and diminished lattice energies relative to the 10 bulk. The result of these modifications is that physical, spectroscopic, and thermodynamic properties, which are constant in the bulk, become size dependent variables in nanocrystals. The ability to modify the thermodynamic properties of nanocrystals, particularly the melting temperature, is exploited in the present invention to produce thin film IC structures at low temperature.

15 Metallic nanocrystals have been shown to reduce melting temperatures compared with the bulk. (Ph. Buffat and J-P. Borel, Phys. Rev. A, 13, (1976), pp. 2287 -2298. 2287-2298; C. J. Coombes, J. Phys., 2, (1972), pp. 441-449; J. Eckert, J. C. Holzer, C.C. Ahn, Z. Fu and W. L. Johnson, Nanostruct. Matls., 2, (1993). 407-413.; C.R.M. Wronski, Brit. J. Appl. Phys. 18, (1967), pp. 1731- 20 1737 and M. Wautelet, J. Phys. D, 24, (1991), 343-346). The depression in melting and annealing temperature is evident throughout the nanocrystal size regime, with the most dramatic effects observed in nanocrystals having a diameter from 2 to 6 nm. Melting studies on a range of nanocrystals have

to form microelectronic structures in an existing recess within a wafer substrate is also taught.

Detailed Description of the Invention

A method is detailed herein which uses a Damascene process to create interconnects from nanocrystalline precursors materials. While the present invention is not limited to a particular metal, or metallic cation-containing compound such as an oxide, nitride, phosphide, or intermetallic, it is particularly well suited for the efficient formation of copper interconnects at temperatures below 400 degrees Celsius and even below 300 degrees Celsius.

A silicon wafer that has been patterned by lithography and etched to form a series of trenches is the substrate for the instant invention the exposed surface of which also contains SiO_2 . It is appreciated that an intermediate wetting layer is optionally applied to the substrate to promote interconnect wetting thereof and to prevent interdiffusion during subsequent IC processing.

The present invention identifies significant cost efficiencies based on the deposition characteristics of nanocrystal-based construction of electronic devices. The nanocrystal solutions or suspensions are applied by spray or spin coating onto a trenched integrated circuit (IC) wafer. The present invention supplants expensive vacuum evaporation equipment with a paint booth or spin coating technology for the formation of integrated circuitry interconnect structures. Unlike chemical and physical vapor deposition techniques, the present invention selectively deposits nanocrystal particulate

in the IC trenches by taking advantage of the slower volatilization of a solvent carrier from trenches, causing the nanocrystals to congregate in high aspect ratio features. As a result, the quantity of extraneous deposition material, which must be removed by CMP, is diminished. Lastly, an
5 environmental benefit results from pre-selecting aqueous and or benign organic solvents the nanocrystal solution, in place of solvents currently used in the chip manufacturing process.

The present invention also identifies cost savings associated with production defects. Nanocrystal deposition of interconnects is both
10 reversible and repairable. Poor deposition technique is corrected by resolubilizing nanocrystals stranded on a trenched IC substrate by solvent washing prior to sintering the nanocrystals. Further, trench regions showing incomplete filling or separation from the trench walls can be remedied after sintering or melting to form bulk material interconnect features through the
15 reapplication of a nanocrystal solution. Because the solvent containing the nanocrystals can freely penetrate fissures and voids associated with an IC patterned for an interconnect, additional nanocrystals are deposited into poorly filled regions.

A nanocrystal solution is applied to flood the wafer surface. The solvent
20 penetrates the trench recesses within the wafer surface, including those shadowed or otherwise obscured from evaporative methods. In the process nanocrystals dissolved or suspended in the solution are carried into these regions. The solvent volatilizes more quickly from the wafer plateaus as

compared to the recesses causing the nanocrystals to become concentrated in the shrinking solvent pools within the recesses. The nanocrystals become stranded in the dry trenches. Heating the wafer to a temperature sufficient to sinter or melt the nanocrystals results in the formation of bulk polycrystalline domains.

In the case of many technologically important interconnect materials such as copper, the intermediate layer is illustratively a layer of TiN or TaN having a sufficient thickness to assure continuity. Other such intermediate layers are formed by evaporation of a base metal layer onto the trenched substrate and thereafter exposing the base metal layer to a nitrogen plasma to induce a surface nitriding as is conventional to the art.

A solution of dissolved or suspended nanocrystals is applied to the contoured surface of the wafer. Preferably, the nanocrystal solution or suspension is concentrated to opaqueness to facilitate rapid deposition of interconnect structures. Following the evaporation of the solvent, adjacent particles are heated to form bulk domains within the trenches. Extraneous nanocrystal material is removed from exposed surfaces by conventional wafer polishing techniques subsequent to heating or by swabbing the wafer plateau with a dry or solvent impregnated lint-free cloth prior to heating.

The solvent utilized to form the solution is optionally aqueous or organic. The solvent is chosen based on factors including, but not limited to

hydrophilicity of the wafer surface, solubility of the nanocrystals therein, vapor pressure, toxicity, purity and the like.

The nanocrystal is defined as a particle having a linear dimension in any direction on the order of nanometers, namely 1 to 100 nm in diameter.

5 Preferably, the nanocrystal of the present invention is between 2 and 20 nm. More preferably, the nanocrystal of the present invention is between 2 and 10 nm. The size distribution of the nanocrystals in solution is of some importance, since the sintering temperature of particles in this size regime is size dependent. Likewise, the melting temperature is size dependent. Preferably, a size

10 distribution of less than 30 % of the average particle diameter is used for nanocrystals of an average diameter of less than about 6 nm with increasingly greater tolerances being preferred as the average particle increases beyond 6 nm. The nanocrystals are optionally either dispersed in a solvent by conventional means illustratively including sonication, agitation, solution

15 shearing and the like; or the nanocrystal surface is coupled to a passivating agent by adsorption or chemically bonding thereto. The passivating agent preferably being soluble in the solvent and thus imparting solubility to the particles. Preferably, the nanocrystals are soluble to promote segregation into low volatilization rate, trench and via regions as compared to wafer plateaus.

20 More preferably, the nanocrystals are copper for the formation of an interconnect.

The passivating agent is introduced to prevent nanocrystal growth beyond a pre-selected size and preferably to also impart solubility on the

nanocrystal in a solvent. The passivating agent illustratively includes a variety of thermally volatile organics including those of the formula XRY where X is a moiety Capable of chemically bonding to a surface atom of the nanocrystal and illustratively includes alcohol, amine, carboxylate, ketone, thiol, imide, amide, 5 sulfonyl, nitril, aldehyde, and phosphorus containing moieties; R is C₁ – C₃₀ aliphatic, aryl or heteroatom substituted derivative thereof and Y is X or hydrogen. The RY portion of the passivating agent is optionally chosen to interact with the solvent to impart solubility. In another embodiment, Y bonds to the surface of a second nanocrystal to tether nanocrystals together. Further, 10 dendritic or polymeric variants of XRY are operative to form an extended matrix of nanocrystals. Preferably, the passivating agent is a linear C₂ – C₂₄ alkane – thiol, amine, carboxylate or phosphorus-containing moiety. The nanocrystal surface binding passivating agent moiety being dictated by established organometallic chemistry.

15 The nanocrystal size is selected to take advantage of size dependent sintering and melting temperatures. The stability of the underlying wafer architecture is typically the controlling factor in determining optimal melting temperature and thus nanocrystal size. Preferably, nanocrystals are selected having a maximal heating requirement to obtain desired electrical 20 conductivities from the resulting bulk structure of less than about 350 degrees Celsius. More preferably, the nanocrystals are heated to less than 300 degrees Celsius. The melting temperature of various sizes of nanocrystals is calculable (Wautelet J. Phys. D 24 (1991) 343).

Nanocrystals are applied to the water by applying the solution thereto. Layering a solution of the instant invention onto a wafer is operative. Preferably, the solution is applied in such a way as to promote uniform deposition of the nanocrystals across whole wafers, such methods illustratively include atomizing the solution and applying as a fine nanocrystal paint spray; and spin coating the solution onto a rotating wafer. Optionally, a binder is dispersed in the solution to minimize particle movement as the solvent pool evaporates. A binder useful in the present invention includes low molecular weight and polymeric organic substances. The binder being chosen such that upon heating to a temperature of less than about 250 to 300 degrees Celsius, the binder is volatilized. The binder is chosen to minimize binder residues, the residues likely to decrease conductivity of the bulk domain resulting from heating the nanocrystals. Binders illustratively include waxes; aliphatic compounds containing at least eight carbon atoms including carboxylic acids, alcohols, aldehydes, amines, thiols and salt thereof wherein the cation is a conductive metal ion illustratively including copper, aluminum, magnesium, gold, silver, manganese, molybdenum and the like; polymeric materials which volatilize to greater than 95 % by weight below 250 degrees Celsius including poly (acrylic acid), polyglycols, polycarbonates, polyalkyls, polyalcohols, polyesters and the like; proteinaceous substrates such as albumin, gelatin and collagen; carbohydrates; and organosilanes.

The nanocrystals of the instant invention are composed of any material that is conventionally used to create interconnect structures, intermediate layers

or barrier structures in microelectronics. These materials illustratively include: aluminum, copper, gold, manganese, molybdenum, nickel, palladium, platinum, tin, zinc, tantalum, titanium and silver, alloys, oxides, nitrides and phosphides thereof. Further, in instance where one wishes to create a metal-oxide-semiconductor (MOS) junction intermediate or barrier structures, nanocrystals of the metallic elements may be deposited and oxidized to positive oxidation state greater than zero by heating to a temperature of less than 500 degrees Celsius or subjecting the metal to a gaseous plasma in an atmosphere of the gaseous oxidant. The metallic elements being oxidized to form a variety of metal compounds including oxides, nitrides, and phosphides. Alternately, nanocrystals of the oxides are synthesized and stranded directly into IC wafer trenches and vias. It is appreciated that upon heating metallic nanocrystals in order to form conductive structures, it may be necessary to perform such heating under an inert or reducing atmosphere to prevent unwanted oxidation.

15 Nanocrystals of various compositions may be mixed together and heated to form intermetallic composition interconnects. Simultaneous sintering and or fusion of the differing composition nanocrystals are assured through the choice of particle sizes.

There are three temperature ranges important to the process of converting a trench of wafer filled with nanocrystals into an operative IC structure. The nanocrystal application temperature occurs at any temperature at which the solvent is liquid. It is appreciated that higher application temperature decreases the number of wafer surface sites a nanocrystal contacts prior to

being stranded on a dry wafer. In a preferred embodiment, the nanocrystal surface is coated with a passivating agent that imparts solvent solubility to the nanocrystal. Upon heating a nanocrystal filled wafer above the passivating agent thermalization temperature, the passivating agent is volatilized allowing
5 clean nanocrystal surfaces of contiguous nanocrystals into contact. While the passivating agent volatilization temperature is largely size independent and related to the chemisorption or physisorption energy between the passivating agent and the nanocrystal surface atoms, nanocrystal sintering and melting temperature are controllable over hundreds of degrees Celsius through
10 nanocrystal size domain selection. One the passivating agent is volatilized contiguous nanocrystals are able to sinter.

Sintering is defined as the interfacial coalescence of contiguous particles while the particle cores retain prior crystalline properties. Sintering temperature is calculable or approximated as two thirds of the substance
15 melting temperature in degrees Kelvin. Further, heating beyond the sintering temperature brings the nanocrystals to a size dependent melting temperature. Melting of a contiguous matrix of nanocrystals results in a densified polycrystalline bulk structure.

The present invention is capable of overcoming prior art limitations
20 regarding dimensional shrinkage associated with densification, thin film instability through repetitive nanocrystal solution application. (K.T. Miller et al. J. Mater Res. 5 (1990) 151-160; B. A. Korgel and D. Fitzmaurice Phys.

Rev. Let 80 (1998) 3531-3534; A. G. Evans et al. J. Mater Res. 3 (1988) 1043-1049).

Significant shrinkage is associated with passivating agent volatilization, thus after applying a nanocrystal solution to a wafer, the wafer is heated to the passivating agent volatilization temperature and additional nanocrystal solution applied to fill feature voids associated with volatilization. This process is optionally repeated prior to raising the wafer to a sintering or melting temperature for the nanocrystal mass filling a wafer trench or via. It is appreciated that nanocrystal deposition is optionally carried out at a temperature above the passivating agent volatilization temperature such that active nanocrystal surfaces are formed upon contact with a trenched wafer.

The relevant volatilization sintering and melting temperatures for a given nanocrystal solution are determinable through thermals analysis, techniques such as differential scanning calorimetry (DSC), thermal gravimetric analysis (TGA), temperature dependent spectroscopies and conductivity.

In another embodiment, the passivating agent is an electrically conductive polymer that electrically couples contiguous nanocrystals to one another obviating the need for passivating agent volatilization.

In instances where the interconnect is being deposited onto a silicon oxide surface other factors need to be considered. Metals often poorly wet oxide surfaces and thus an intermediate conventional adhesion-promoting layer is applied. In those instances where a hydrophobic solvent is used to coat a

hydrophilic oxide surface, the solvent can be induced to wet the oxide surface by washing the wafer surface with a silanol or similar surfactant prior to deposition of the particle containing solvent. The silanol wash creates a thin layer that projects organic functionalities away from the surface which
5 attractively interact with the particle surfaces of hydrophobic particles and simultaneously bonds to the oxide surface through the hydroxyl functionality. It is appreciated that other adhesion promoters known to the art of laminating non-wettable oxide and metallic layers are operative herein under the disclosed thermal conditions.

10 In order to fill a trench with a conductive interconnect, there must be enough particles present such that the particles as deposited are at or above the percolation threshold. The percolation threshold is defined herein as a spatial density of particles sufficient to traverse the region through at least one continuous pathway of contiguous particles. To assure percolation threshold
15 attainment and therefore conductivity upon sintering or fusing the particles, a trench feature is preferably at least 7 particle widths in the directions parallel to the wafer surface. Thus, the instant invention is best utilized with trench features larger than about 7 nm.

Having described the inventions, the following illustrative examples are
20 provided which are not intended to limit the scope of the invention.

Example 1 A solution of 3 nm gold nanocrystals passivated with dodecanethiol are synthesized using the method of Leff et al, J. Phys. Chem. 99, (1995) 7036. The gold particles are redissolved in toluene and the toluene

solution pipetted onto a trenched silicon wafer having a silicon dioxide surface and a 50 nm layer of TiN over 100 nm of Ti and trench widths of from 5 microns to 0.2 microns. The solution is reddish-black in color and leaves a black film on the wafer following solvent evaporation. The wafer is then
5 allowed to air dry and then heated in air for 2 hours at 300 degrees Celsius. Upon heating the black film of gold nanocrystals takes on a metallic yellowish hue of bulk gold. The surface shows no traces the dodecanethiol passivating agent as determined by X-ray Photospectroscopy (XPS). The gold is observed to be preferentially deposited in the trenches, as compared to the wafer upper
10 surface.

Example 2

The procedure of Example 1 is repeated with the particles dissolved in hexane in place of toluene, with similar results.

Example 3 The nanocrystals of Example 1 are spun coated at 300
15 rpm onto a rotating trenched wafer. Upon light reflectance associated with the wafer trench pattern being obscured by the black nanocrystal deposits thereon, the wafer is heated to 150 degrees Celsius for 20 minutes. Greater than 99.9 % of the dodecanethiol is observed to volatilize according to TGA. Additional nanocrystal solution is applied to the wafer. Following drying, the wafer is
20 heated to 300 degrees Celsius resulting in complete filling of the wafer trenches with bulk gold features. Few isolated gold domains are observed on the wafer plateau.

Example 4 The procedure of Example 3 is repeated after dissolving one part by weight of paraffin in the nanocrystal solution per 50 parts toluene. The solution is atomized onto the wafer and allowed to dry. Upon heating as above, a more uniform distribution of particles across the wafer plateau and
5 trenches is noted.

Example 5 The procedure of Example 3 is repeated with copper nanocrystals made by a preparation analogous to Leff et al. with copper (II) chloride used in place of hydrogen tetrachloroaurate and the amine substituted for the thiol. The particles are synthesized in batches having average sizes
10 ranging from 1.5 to 6 nm by adjusting the molar ratio to passivating molecule to copper. The copper particles are heated in a reducing atmosphere of 10 % hydrogen and 90 % nitrogen at 300 degrees Celsius for 2 hours. A metallic sheen characteristic of bulk copper is observed.

Example 6 Copper nanocrystals and silver nanocrystal of 3 and 3.5
15 nm, respectively, are made as per A. Manna et al., Chem. Mater 9 (1997), 3032-3036. The nanocrystals are mixed with 3 nm Au nanocrystals to a Au: Cu: Ag total weight ratio of 7:78:15 and dissolved in hexane. The nanocrystal is spray coated using a paint sprayer onto a trenched wafer, prior to heating to 350 degrees Celsius. The wafer features are wholly filled with metal having a
20 resistivity consistent with literature values.

Example 7 The procedure of Example 3 is repeated with the nanocrystal solution applied to a wafer heated to 150 degrees Celsius.

Following solution application, the wafer is heated to 350 degrees Celsius to yield a bulk gold interconnects in the wafer trenches.

Example 8 The procedure of Example 7 is repeated with the nanocrystal solution applied to a wafer at 350 degrees Celsius. Bulk gold is
5 observed coating the plateau and trenches uniformly.

It is appreciated that various modification of the present invention in addition to those shown and described herein will be apparent to those skilled in the art from the above description. Such modifications are also intended to fall within the scope of the appended claims.

10 All references cited herein are intended to be incorporated by reference to the same extent as if each was individually and explicitly incorporated by reference.

Claims:

- 1 1. A method for producing a structure comprising:
 - 2 applying a solvent comprising metal containing nanocrystals to a wafer
 - 3 having a trench cut therein, said nanocrystals having a diameter of between 2
 - 4 and 20 nanometers; and
 - 5 heating said wafer to form a continuous polycrystalline domain from
 - 6 said nanocrystals within said trench.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1 wherein said nanocrystals are composed of a
 - 2 material selected from the group consisting of: aluminum, copper, gold, silver,
 - 3 manganese, molybdenum, nickel, palladium, platinum, tin, zinc, tantalum,
 - 4 titanium, alloys, oxides, nitrides and phosphides thereof.
- 1 3. The method of claim 1 wherein said nanocrystals dissolved in said
 - 2 solvent.
- 1 4. The method of claim 1 wherein said solvent further comprises a binder.
- 1 5. The method of claim 1 wherein applying and heating are performed
 - 2 simultaneously.
- 1 6. The method of claim 1 wherein said nanocrystals are copper.

1 7. The method of claim 1 wherein said continuous polycrystalline domain
2 comprises sintered nanocrystals.

1 8. The method of claim 1 wherein said continuous polycrystalline domain
2 comprises melted nanocrystals

1 9. The method of claim 1 wherein said wafer is heated to less than 350
2 degrees Celsius.

1 10. The method of claim 2 wherein said structure is an intermediate layer
2 and said nanocrystals are selected from the group consisting of titanium,
3 titanium nitride, tantalum and tantalum nitride.

1 11. A method of producing a microelectronic interconnect comprising:
2 applying a solution comprising soluble copper nanocrystals to a wafer
3 having a trench cut therein, said copper nanocrystals having a diameter of
4 between 2 nm and 10 nm; and

5 heating said wafer to form a continuous polycrystalline copper
6 interconnect with said trench.

1 12. The method of claim 11 wherein applying and heating are performed
2 simultaneously.

1 13. The method of claim 11 wherein applying said solution involves spin
2 coating.

1 14. The method of claim 11 wherein applying said solution involves spray
2 coating.

1 15. A microelectronic structure comprising:
2 nanocrystalline domains in electrical contact with one another, said
3 domains formed to an existing recess within a wafer substrate.

1 16. The structure of claim 15 wherein said domains having dimension of 2
2 to 10 nanometers.

1 17. The structure of claim 15 wherein said domains comprise an element or
2 compound selected from the group consisting of: aluminum, copper, gold,
3 manganese, molybdenum, nickel, palladium, platinum, tin, zinc, tantalum,
4 titanium and silver, alloys, oxides, nitrides and phosphides thereof.

1 18. The structure of claim 15 wherein said domains comprise copper.

1 19. The use of metallic nanocrystals to form a microelectronic structure in
2 an existing recess within a wafer substrate.

1 20. The use of claim 19 wherein said nanocrystals are copper.

1 21. The use of claim 19 wherein said structure is an interconnect.

1 22. The use of claim 19 wherein said structure is an intermediate layer.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US99/18430

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(6) :H01L 21/20, 21/44, 23/48

US CL :438/666, 674; 257/773

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 438/666, 667, 674, 675, 687; 257/773, 774, 786

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched
NONE

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

US PTO APS EAST (nanocrystals, trench)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 5,670,279 A (GOLDSTEIN) 23 September 1997, (23/09/97) col. 8, line 6, to col. 9, line 13.	1-22
A	US 5,576,248 A (GOLDSTEIN) 19 November 1996, (19/11/96) entire document.	1-22
A	US 5,559,057 A (GOLDSTEIN) 24 September 1996, (27/09/96) entire document.	1-22
A	US 5,324,553 A (OVSHINSKY et al) 28 June 1994, (28/06/94) entire document.	1-22
A	US 5,262,357 A (ALIVISATOS et al) 16 November 1993, (16/11/93) Entire document.	1-22



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:	*T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
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Date of the actual completion of the international search

17 NOVEMBER 1999

Date of mailing of the international search report

02 DEC 1999

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